Rational. software

IBM Rational Method Composer

Formatting and Writing Tips for Method Authors

Updated 22 October 2008 by
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Content

Abstract

These guidelines describe what writers need to know about writing and formatting text in Method Composer for a process Web site (as used here, Method Composer means either EPF Composer or IBM® Rational® Method Composer). This information is applicable to developing any content provided in the detailed (HTML) fields of method elements. Content developers who follow these guidelines will produce information that is easier and faster for both reviewers and readers to understand, as well as faster to process for publication.

Text formatting, capitalization, and punctuation

This section describes formatting for the detailed content (HTML) of the method elements, which is typically entered into the rich-text editor (RTE) of Method Composer. (As used here, Method Composer means either EPF Composer or IBM® Rational® Method Composer.)

Capitalization and punctuation

Also see Headings and subheads.

For capitalization, follow this commonsense rule: If in doubt, **do not capitalize**. Capitalize only proper names or names of labels and such. See Table 1 for capitalization and formatting of specific technical terms and various instructions. **Important:** Also see the separate common word list for capitalization and punctuation of frequently used terms.

Use initial capital letters to refer to the names of specific work products but lowercase to refer to the concept in general. Example: Work Item list, work item

Use "quotation marks" when you cite the name of an article or paper that you will not hyperlink, but use them sparingly otherwise. If there is a hyperlink, the link itself is sufficient formatting. Examples:

See the chapter titled "Introduction in Software Cost Estimation with COCOMO II."

Check the Rational software section of IBM® developerWorks® for more information.

Do not use slashes (/), or virgules, because they cause translation problems and can be ambiguous. Do not use a slash unless it is part of an official name or technical term, such as client/server.

IBM uses American English spelling and punctuation styles:
- Quotation marks nearly always go after or outside of the end punctuation, unlike British English style. Example: The closing quotation marks go "after the end punctuation."
- Example: Write *artifact*, not *artefact*, and *globalization* rather than *globalisation*.

Put only one space after end punctuation, never two or more (two = the outdated typewriter convention, before we had software with variable-spaced type).

Use serial commas. In a series of items within a sentence or phrase, put commas after every one. Example: "The boy took the ball, bat, gloves, and uniform to the park."

Avoid creating long sentences by using commas.

Keep the sentence structure simple:

- Avoid using semicolons. Simplify the sentence or break it into two sentences, instead.

- Avoid using nonstandard punctuation, such as em dashes (—) Commas usually suffice and look better. If you need to use an em dash because the statement is a digression, use two hyphens, instead, to avoid HTML translation problems. Example:

  The Jazz server -- normally running on a Java™ 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition (J2EE), Version 1.4-compliant application serer -- hosts a set of key services and data for process control and collaboration.

Fonts and type styles

Do not apply text or paragraph styles to HTML text, because that is controlled by the cascading style sheet (CSS) for consistency. Do not use colored type in text, either.

If you are writing in Word, use the default **Caption** style, but change it to flush left (**Format > Styles and Formatting**). Otherwise, unless you get other instructions, use Arial 10 pt bold for captions, flush left.

Follow these guidelines for which type style to use for emphasis or special purposes:
- Use **bold**:
  - To emphasize text that is particularly important, bearing in mind that overusing bold reduces its impact and readability.
  - For any label or item that the reader needs to select or click to follow instructions.
- Use *italic*:
  - When introducing a word that you will also define or are using in a special way (use rarely, and do not use for slang). Onscreen, you can use bold for this purpose instead. Just be consistent.
  - For titles of books, journals, or other publications
  - Never use italic text for more than a few words, because it is difficult to read.
- Use "screen font" or "code font" tags (`Courier New` typeface) in these instances:
  - Anything that the reader must type or enter.
  - Names of methods, classes, patterns, and so forth.

It will be helpful to keep Table 1 handy until you know these styles without checking.

Table 1. Type style and capitalization quick reference

Type of item	Style	Capitalization
API name	normal	title case
attribute name	`code font`	as used
boxes (names): list box, check box	normal	as used
button name, hardware	normal	as used or as UI shows
button or icon name, onscreen	**bold**	title case or as UI shows
check boxes	**bold**	as used
citations: books, CDs	*italic*	title case
citations: information centers	normal	title case
class name	normal	as used
click item (tab, label, word)	**bold**	title case
code listings (aka snippets)	`code font`	as used

Type of item	Style	Capitalization
code onscreen (output)	`code font`	as used
code text or string	`code font`	as used
command name	`code font`	title case or as user types it
command sequence to click	**bold**	as used
command to type (user input)	`code font`	as used
containers	**bold**	as used
database table names	normal	as used
defined terms, in text (bold onscreen)	bold or italic	as used
dialog name	normal	title case
directory (tree) name	normal	as used
emphasis (words), in print	*italic*	as used
emphasis (words), onscreen	**bold**	as used
environment variables (bold if hard to see)	normal	as used
field name	**bold**	as used
file name	normal	as used
folder name	normal	as used
icon names	**bold**	as used
interface controls (also see type)	**bold**	as used
key name	normal	title case
labels (Tip, Note)	**bold**	sentence case
letters, if only one	**bold**	capital
list boxes	**bold**	as used
menu choices	**bold**	as used
menu name	**bold**	as used
message text	`code font`	as used
method type or name	normal	title case
new terms in text (but not a definition)	bold onscreen	as used
Note text (callouts: Notes: with "Notes:" in bold)	normal text	sentence case
object type or name	normal	as used
pane or panel name only if in sentence case	"in quotes"	as used
pane or panel name if in title case	normal	title case
parameters in text (bold for default or if hard to distinguish from text)	normal	as used
path name or syntax	normal	as used
pattern name	`code font`	as used
prompts to user	`code font`	as used
radio button names	**bold**	as used
screen elements (see type)	normal	as used
screen output	`code font`	as used
storage areas	normal	usually lowercase
tab names	**bold**	as used
table column heading	**bold** [in table]	sentence case
table title or name, reference in text	normal	title case
tags in markup languages	<in brackets>	as used
tasks	normal	usually lowercase
terms: definitions, in print	*italic*	as used

Type of item	Style	Capitalization
terms: definitions, onscreen	**bold**	as used
text to type or enter	`code font`	as used
UI elements (see type)	normal	as used
user input	`code font`	as used
utilities	normal	usually lowercase
values for arguments or commands	`code font`	as used
variable name	*italic*	as used
Web addresses [URLs]	normal	as used
window names, sentence case only	"in quotes"	as used
window names, title case	normal	as used

Adapted from IBM Style and technical writing standard practices

Hyperlinks and valid HTML

In all cases, the link on the published page is rendered in blue so that it is easily distinguishable as a hyperlink. Keep these points in mind when you create links in text:

- Use an appropriate display for content links. The link can display:
    - The **title of the content** (for example, Use Case)
    - The **title of the content plus a prefix** (Concept: Use Case)
    - **User-defined text** (*my use case*, for instance)

  Generally, it is more readable to simply show the title of the content, for example: "A use case describes the system's functional requirements." However, if the link is part of a specific reference, use the prefix, too: "For more information, see Concept: Use Case." In general, try to avoid the user-defined text option, because that text is not maintained if the presentation name of the element changes; whereas, the other options are automatically updated if the presentation names of the elements change.

  Whichever method you use, write so that the text includes the link naturally, and make sure that the link is easy to read.

- Link to other content only the first time that you mention it in the text. Do not link subsequent uses of a phrase that might link to the same content. This prevents the text from containing unnecessary links.

- Do not include hyperlinks to things that are not in the same content package or subpackage as the one that contains the element that you are describing. Also, do not link to things unless there is a relationship to them. (Example of a relevant relationship; a dependency on the plug-in that includes the referenced element).

- If you add a link to a guidance element, make sure that the element that contains the link has an association with that guidance. For method content elements, for example, make sure that the referenced guidance element is listed within the **Guidance** tab. Referring to associated guidance in the text of an element makes it clear where the associated guidance is used. It also makes it quite obvious if there is associated guidance that is never used or when guidance is referred to in the text and not associated with the element.

- If you want to link to an anchor that is defined in the text of a specific method element, insert a link to the element, as usual. Then, from the **HTML** tab in the RTE, edit the inserted link to include the necessary anchor. To reference a specific anchor, append the anchor tag reference following the HTML file reference in the link that Method Composer creates with `#<anchorName>`. For example:

```
<a class="elementlinkwithusertext" href="<the file and guidance info for
the referenced file>.html#<anchor name>" guid=…. >Your Text</a>
```

Validate the HTML

Make sure that all text is enclosed in some kind of HTML tag, even if that is merely paragraph tags: `<p></p>`.

Consider taking advantage of the W3C Markup Validation Service (http://validator.w3.org/), which checks for valid HTML.

Note:
"Tidy" is the HTML formatter that the Method Composer tool uses. If it encounters "bad HTML" that it cannot make tidy, Method Composer records the problem in log files (in the metadata directory) and then drops those attributes. Currently, Method Composer gives no indication that there was a problem (other than missing attributes). Therefore, after copying and pasting text, be sure to check that the result is what you expected and that all content is there.

Because Method Composer is not a full-featured HTML editor, in some cases, you may not be able to get the formatting control that you want by using the rich-text editor (RTE). In such cases, use a full-featured HTML editor and then copy and paste the HTML code (just the text and tags between the `<body>` and `</body>` tags) into the HTML tab of Method Composer's RTE.

Headings and subheadings

Note:
In the Method Composer RTE, the Section Heading style is H3. Stick to using the styles provided in the drop-down menu of the RTE.

- Use HTML H2 (Heading 2 tags) for page titles.

- Use HTML H3 (Heading 3) tag for the first-level heading.

- Use no more than three levels of headings (H3, H4, and H5).
    - Deeper nesting is usually confusing.
    - Rethink and "rechunk" what you are saying when you find yourself doing otherwise.

- Do not number headings or subheadings (1.1, 1.1.1, 1.1.1.1 and so on).

- Use sentence style capitalization for all headings and subheadings and no end punctuation (use title style only for titles)
    - This is sentence style
    - This Is Title Style

- To avoid confusing the reader, use unique names for all section headings and all subheadings.

- Always introduce a subheading with a sentence or two, and never put a subheading immediately after a heading with no text in between.

- Avoid creating content with only one subheading under a heading.

- Use letters for appendix names: Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, and so on.

List formats

There are two types of lists:

- **Bulleted lists**, also called unordered lists, which are not numbered. Use these when sequence is not important, such as for a simple list of concepts, names, and so on.

- **Numbered lists**, also called ordered lists. Use these when sequence is important, such as for steps that must be performed in the given order.

In general:

- Use lists rather than tables wherever possible, because it reduces the likelihood of accessibility errors.

- Do not use any kind of list unless there will be at least two items, preferably at least three.

- Do not go more than three levels deep, and try to keep it to two.

- Keep items to one line when possible, especially for bulleted lists.

- Rethink and "rechunk" what you're saying when you end up with long items.

- **Do not** create your own list styles. Use the default styles in the RTE.

- Use sentence style capitalization, where each item starts with a capital letter, but do not capitalize other words unless they are proper names.

- If one item is a complete sentence or more then one sentence, then either rewrite to express the idea succinctly in a phrase or reword all items to make them complete sentences.

- If you use complete sentences, use end punctuation (periods, preferably); otherwise, do not use end punctuation.

- Use parallel construction and active verbs. Begin each item in the same way, preferably with a verb.

- Avoid "ing" words, such as "using," because they are weaker than more direct, active verbs, such as "use."

- Always introduce a list with a sentence or two.

- Do not end that introductory sentence with "the following:" because "following" is an adjective. Put a noun after it, such as "the following methods:" Better yet, vary the wording of the introductions to lists and avoid that tired style altogether. For example:

    Most teams need three major models:
    - Design model
    - Implementation model
    - Use-case model

Tables

Use the following formatting conventions:

Standard settings

- **Basic:** Border width = 1; cell space = 0; cell padding = 2; vertical alignment = top

- Generally, set tables at 85% of the page width, with the width of the table cells and columns not specified. You can make them narrower or wider if necessary, but it looks better to keep the widths consistent if possible. See the tip that follows.

- Table alignment: Left-aligned

- Text alignment within table cells:
    - Set vertical alignment to **Top** (`valign=top`) in the `<tbody>` tag.
    - Set horizontal alignment in `<td>` cells to **Default**.
    - Set horizontal alignment in `<th>` cells to **Left** (`<align="left">`).

- Example:

```
<heading refname="table1" type="table"><b>Table 1. Table with 3
columns, 3 rows to adapt by adding or deleting columns or
rows</b></heading>

<table border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" class="data-table-1"
width="85%"

        summary="Table using a heading tag for the caption, all columns
left-aligned">

  <tr align="left" valign="top">

    <th scope="col">Header 1</th>

    <th scope="col">Header 2</th>

    <th scope="col">Header 3</th>

  </tr>

  <tr align="left" valign="top">

    <td class="tb-row" scope="row">First cell in first row</td>

    <td>Second cell in first row</td>

    <td>Third cell in first row</td>

  </tr>

  <tr align="left" valign="top">

    <td class="tb-row" scope="row">First cell in second row</td>

    <td>Second cell in second row</td>

    <td>Third cell in second row</td>

  </tr>

  <tr align="left" valign="top">

    <td class="tb-row" scope="row">First cell in third row</td>

    <td>Second cell in third row</td>

    <td>Third cell in third row</td>

  </tr>

</table>

<br />
```

Special settings

- See [Accessibility requirements](#) for more guidelines on tables, including the requirement for table headers (`<TH>`) in data tables.

- Tables that are used to control the layout of the text or of images (as opposed to data tables) do not need borders. If you do not want them to show, change the border width setting to zero for that purpose. For example: `Border width = 0`

- For table cells that will be blank (those without content), use a nonbreaking space code (` `) to keep the formatting correct.

Tip:
The table editing feature of Method Composer is limited. Thus, it is better to do any advanced table formatting in a separate HTML editor and then copy it into the HTML tab of the RTE.

Illustrations (graphics)

Whether you are using screen captures (screenshots) or other kinds of illustrations, follow these guidelines for how to include graphics in your HTML file.

File formats

- Both GIF and JPG formats were designed to use online.
  - GIFs tend to work better for drawings, diagrams, or charts.
  - JPGs work better for screenshots or photos.
  - You can use JPGs for either but not GIFs for either.

- Do not use bitmap (BMP) files for images in printed or online documents.

File names and storage

- Store graphics as separate files so that they can be referenced in the HTML as a link.

- Name graphic files so that they closely match the corresponding HTML file name, and use lowercase.

- Keep graphic file sizes small. The maximum width for a graphic is 12 cm (600 pixels, about 5 inches wide). Wider graphics may get distorted.

- Place the graphics in a separate image file repository or folder to make translation and redoing the graphics, if necessary, easier. This is typically the \resources folder, which is one level below the HTML file in the file directory structure.

Display considerations

- All illustrations (figures, tables, code listings) must be numbered if there is more than one. They also require captions, which go above the illustrations and use sentence case. For example:

  Figure NN. Sentence style caption goes here

  Also see [Fonts and type styles](#) for information about captions.

- All graphics must have a very brief ALT text tag that describes what the image shows and does not duplicate the caption, so that a blind or visually impaired reader knows what the graphic illustrates as a sighted reader does. See [Accessibility requirements](#).

- Align graphics flush left in the text. Do not put them in table cells or text boxes.

- Do not use fancy borders, such as jagged edges. Use default, simple settings.

- Do not use red for arrows, circles, labels and such, because colorblind people cannot distinguish red or green. Use blue or gold or use yellow highlighting.

- Do not use clip art, because it usually looks amateurish and may be copyrighted.

- Whenever possible, make the image small enough to fit into a screen view without scrolling. This may require placing the graphic elsewhere or editing text to make it shorter.

- Use **Preview** to check how the graphic will look when published.

Accessibility requirements

By law, in the United States and many other countries, Web content must be accessible to those with disabilities, such as visual impairments. So that screen reader software can read the content, make sure that you have met these requirements:

- Every graphic requires an alternative text (ALT) tag that does not duplicate the caption:
  ```
  <img src="images/filename.gif" ALT="Brief description of what the image shows">
  ```

- Do not rely on an image (graphic) to convey information that the reader must know or do something with, because screen reader software cannot read graphics files. You must put that information in the text, too.

- Tables need TH tags:
  ```
  <table>
  <tr>
  <th>Column heading name goes here</th>
  ```
  Use simple tables (avoid any `span` tags, if possible, including `rowspan` and `colspan`).

- Do not use red or green accents or text, because colorblind people cannot distinguish those colors.

(Optional) You can use WebKing or JAWS testing software to validate that the content is accessible.

Consult the Web content accessibility instructions for authors for more information.

Globalization considerations

The words in Table 2 may not translate correctly. Use clear and specific words, instead.

Table 2. Words to avoid and what to use instead to ensure accurate translation

Ambiguous	Clear
as	because
as long as	provided that, if
in spite of	regardless of, despite
may	can, might
once	after, when
on the other hand	however, alternatively

Ambiguous	Clear
since [use only for passage of time]	because
through	finished
via	through
while	although, whereas

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Trademark and copyright rules

Using unregistered acronyms or other abbreviations for product names jeopardizes the trademark. Although this is common in internal communication and necessary in file names and paths, never use them in any external publications.

Important:
Check the separate common word list for capitalization and punctuation of frequently used terms.

Product names

Do not abbreviate any IBM product name unless that abbreviation is legally registered as a trademarked short name or acronym. Even when it is (in only a few cases), you must use the full name along with IBM and Rational first (editors will add the trademark symbols as necessary).

IBM must appear before Rational in the product name on the first occurrence in any title, as well as in the text. Thereafter, including "IBM" is optional.

Key rule: Always include the last word that requires a trademark symbol, even on subsequent uses.

Examples:

> **First use:** IBM® Rational Unified Process® (RUP®)
> **Thereafter:** RUP

> **First use:** IBM® Rational® Method Composer
> **Thereafter:** Rational Method Composer
> **Do not use:** RMC

> **First use:** IBM® Rational® ClearCase®
> **Thereafter:** ClearCase

Use the trademark symbols only on the first mention in the text of the full trademarked name in a particular document or Web page. You do not need to use them every time.

Never use an abbreviation or acronym for an IBM product unless that abbreviation is a registered trademark, such as RUP. Even then, you must use the full name on first use:
> **First use:** IBM® Rational Unified Process® (RUP®)
> **Thereafter:** RUP

Note:
Do not use RMC for Rational Method Composer.

Product names always require "Rational" even on subsequent use, but features of products and names of tools within products do not. Product names are adjectives, legally, so they must always be followed by nouns (unless it is truly awkward to do so). For e*xample* (after first use):

> Rational Application Developer platform
> Project Explorer

The guidelines in this section apply to the trademark symbol and the registered trademark symbol for products and companies that you mention in titles or text.

Product names are not trademarked in titles, except for Java.

The IBM names included in this listing with the registered trademark should always use the registered trademark symbol ® on first reference. Names without the registered mark should use the common-law trademark symbol ™, but only if they are listed on the IBM Copyright and Trademark Information page.

Legally, all product names are adjectives. Therefore, they must modify nouns, so you must add appropriate words.

Examples:
> IBM® Rational® ClearCase® software
> IBM® Rational® ClearCase® application
> IBM® Rational® ClearCase® software application
> IBM® Rational® ClearCase® configuration management tool

Do not use trademarks as possessives.
> **Incorrect:** The Aptiva's features.....
> **Correct:** The Aptiva system's features.....

Do not use a trademark when what you mean is a generic name.
> **Incorrect:** Use a ThinkPad computer from any manufacturer.
> **Correct:** Use a notebook computer.

Add the following only when the company's products are mentioned: These companies have reciprocal trademarking agreements with IBM; therefore, we add trademark statements for them when their companies or products are mentioned in the Web content, article, tutorial or course (be sure to check the Special Attributions section of the IBM Copyright and Trademark page for what wording to include and updates):
- Adobe® and Adobe® PostScript®
- Intel®
- IT Infrastructure Library® (ITIL®)
- ITIL®
- Linux®
- Microsoft®
- Sony® Cell Broadband Engine®
- Sun Microsystems® (Java®)
- UNIX®

Follow these guidelines when using IBM, IBM subsidiary, and non-IBM trademarks:

- Spell and capitalize trademarks exactly as the trademark owner does.
- Precede the first occurrence of non-IBM trademarks with the name of the trademark owner:
  Incorrect: If you are using PowerPoint…..
  Correct: If you are using Microsoft® PowerPoint®….

Writing tips

Reread and revise. If possible, put what you wrote aside for a few days and reread it later.

The 5 Cs of good writing: clear, concise, comprehensible, consistent, and correct

Use active rather than passive voice

- Write sentences in an active, imperative voice, because it is easier to read and understand, clearer, and more direct. It also makes your writing livelier.
    - The active voice is when the subject of a sentence is who or what acts or takes the action.
    - The passive voice is the opposite, where the thing that's being acted upon becomes the subject.
    - Any time that the reader might wonder "who or what did that?" because you have not made that clear, that's passive voice.
    - Occasionally, rewriting the sentence to make it active voice would make it truly awkward or convoluted, so it is acceptable to use passive voice then. This is not usually the case, however.
    - Table 3 shows examples of how to rewrite passive voice.

Table 3. Comparison of passive and active voice

Passive voice	Active voice
For technical writing, the active voice should be used.	Use the active voice for technical writing.
Only one file is shown in this example.	This example shows only one file.
All further references to ClearCase features can be assumed to apply equally to….	You can assume that all further references to ClearCase features apply equally to….
It is better that an SCM system be used when fragmented models are managed.	It is better to use an SCM system when you are managing fragmented models.

Write in the present tense

Present tense is easier to write, plus it is easier and livelier to read. It also keeps you, as the writer, out of trouble. Staying in the present tense reduces the chance that you will inadvertently switch tenses or change the tone of the text. Trying to write everything in the future tense results in convoluted phrases such as this one: "When completed, the analyst will have tracked all requirement dependencies." It is easier to read and write if you say: "By completing this task, the analyst tracks all requirement dependences."

Another advantage: You can describe how an organization will operate, how it should operate, or how it actually operates. Ideally, the organization will eventually do what you are writing about, so describe it in present tense when you can without awkwardness.

Learn the most commonly misused words and phrases

Be specific and clear. Study Table 4 to see if there are words that you misuse.

Table 4. Commonly misused words and phrases

Rather than	Use
alternately	alternatively = occurring or succeeding by turns (alternating)
alternatively	alternatively = offering or expressing a choice
architect	only as a noun (for a verb, say "design")
break down	divide or separate
brought up, bring up	displayed or discussed, depending on context
consume	use
desire	want
flesh out	expand on, elaborate, describe, depending on context
Latin abbreviations: e.g., i.e., etc.	for example, that is, and so on, and so forth
may	can, might
since	because *(use* since *only for passage of time for accurate translation)*
should	need to, must, *or simply omit and use imperative mood,* depending on context (should can be ambiguous and create psychological resistance in the reader, so avoid using it)
that (as opposed to *which*)	that is usually correct (see *which*)
toward	toward
use case or use-case...	as a noun, two separate words, but as an adjective, hyphenated (use-case model)
utilize, utilization, usage	*use*
versus, vs.	*versus* in text, *vs.* in titles where space is limited (but avoid for accurate translation)
via	by, through, by means of
website, web-site, web site	Web site
which (as opposed to *that*)	*which* starts a separate clause, so use it when the sentence requires that you precede it by a comma
while	*although* (use while to mean *during* for accurate translation)
wish	Want

Know which verbs to use or avoid

Tables 5 and 6 list verbs to use or not use, as well as when or in what context.

Table 5. Verbs to use

Use	When referring to or in connection with
boot, reboot	acceptable in reference to a computer, but use *start* when possible
browse	a site (but not a list)
browse or navigate	browse a site (not *navigate* a site); *navigate* a directory (tree)
clear	removing a check from a check box
click	a menu, option on a drop-down menu, icon, folder, button (such as the OK button), radio button, or tab on a dialog box
drag	an icon or object that can be moved (**Note:** "Drag" implies drop; therefore, do not use "drag and drop" as a verb, but "drag-and-drop" is acceptable as an adjective.)
end	communications, network connections
enter	typing on a command line
expand	a navigation tree; a folder
fail	a disk
finished	for completing a task
is displayed	when a message displays (use this active form, not passive)
lock up, stop	a software program
make available	a button or a menu option (Do not use *enable* unless you are referring to a programmer setting the guidelines for making an option available. For example: The Next button becomes available only after you complete the mandatory items on the form.)
move	sliders, cursors
navigate or browse	navigate a directory, or tree, but *browse* a site
open	a wizard, dialog box, or window (better to just begin describing the next step, rather than stating the obvious -- that the wizard opened)
press	for touching or holding down a keyboard key
quit	a program
select	check boxes, drop-down lists, items on a panel (see entry for *click*)
shut down	close, exit
start, open	a program, a computer
stop	hardware operations
stop responding	a program
type	typing letters or number or characters in a graphical user interface (GUI)
uninstall	a program

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Table 6. Verbs to avoid (Note: For legal reasons, IBM does not "recommend.")

Avoid	Use instead
abort	cancel, stop
allow	Use *enables* or reword to put the emphasis on what the user can do with the program (for example, "You can copy" [not] "The program allows you to copy")
appears	displays, opens
bring up	start, open
consume	use (we *consume* oil, but we merely *use* software, and we do not use jargon)
copy and paste	Use *copy* or *paste*, not both (either implies the other)
crash	fail, lock up, stop, stop responding
deinstall	uninstall
deselect	clear
desire, wish	want
dismiss (window or dialog box)	close
do (a step)	complete, follow, or perform
done	finished (casseroles are *done*, tasks are *finished*)
drag and drop	use *drag* alone
enable	make available -- but better to reword to put the emphasis on what the user can do (for example, "You can copy and paste … " [and not] "The program enables you to cut and paste …")
execute	start, run, issue, enter, open
hit	press
invoke	call, start
launch	start, open
let	can (for example, "you can do a, b, and c" [not] "the program lets you do a, b, and c")
log off of	log off from
position (a cursor)	move (a cursor)
power on (or off)	turn on (or off)
reoccur (or re-occur)	recur
start up	start
terminate	end, stop
wish	want

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Proofread early and often

- Treat process content like source code: do not count on it working until it has gone through multiple tests.

- Always have someone else review process content before publishing the final version.
- A good rule of thumb is to read your text three times.
    o Do the first proofread soon after writing the initial text as a kind of sanity check.
    o After you have edited and added, do the second proofread.
    o Perform the third proofread before sending the content for review and comment.
- Then give it to someone else to proofread. It's a humbling experience that's good for the soul. In the short run, it results in clearer content. In the long run, it makes you a better writer.

Cite sources

All books, journal and Web site articles, and white papers that you reference should be included in a references listing. For each, include these elements in this order:
1. Authors' names
2. Title of the book in italics or the title of article or paper in quotation marks (or with links)
3. Title of the book or journal in italics if you are citing an article or chapter
4. Publisher or Web site name (home page URL optional)
5. Year of publication or, for a Web site, date you accessed for this material

Use caution when you copy and paste text from other sources

It is quite common for authors to copy text from other sources into Method Composer. This section explains precautions to take to avoid problems during production and publication.

Copying from the Web or other HTML sources

When copying and pasting text from another source, remove any extraneous or unnecessary tags and HTML encoding that may accompany the copied text. You can use any of these options for removing the unnecessary tags:
- Paste as plain text into Method Composer. Only the text, not the format of the text, will be pasted into the RTE.
- Paste the text directly into the HTML tab (between the correct HTML tags, of course).
- Paste the text into Notepad and then copy it into the RTE.
- Remove the extraneous code by deleting it manually.

After the text is in Method Composer, you can restore the missing formatting manually.

Firefox is a better browser to use for copying HTML text, because it is more complaint with the XHTML, DOM and CSS standards than Microsoft$^®$ Internet Explorer$^®$.

As a general rule, it is a good idea to check the HTML using the HTML tab of the RTE editor to make sure that the HTML is clean after copying and pasting from other sources. Also see the information on validating the HTML.

Copying text from Microsoft Word

Do not copy and paste directly from Microsoft$^®$ Word, because Word adds many additional tags that only Word interprets correctly. Instead, consider these options:
- Use the Microsoft Word HTML stripper. It removes most of the bad html tags, but it will leave specific fonts that may then need to be removed by hand. Find the HTML stripper here: http://internal.iop.kcl.ac.uk/dev/express/default.aspx

- Use the Microsoft® Office 2000 HTML Filter 2.0, which does a decent job, but still leaves some Microsoft code. To use this filter, you need to save the Word document as minimal html (called "Web Page, filtered" in Word 2003) and then cut or copy the resulting HTML either as HTML or from Microsoft® Internet Explorer into Method Composer's rich-text editor (RTE).
- In Adobe® Dreamweaver®, use the **Clean up Word HTML** feature on the Command menu. This does a more thorough job, but may also affect the formatting of the page.

Microsoft Word includes an optional feature called "smart quotes," which changes the angle of quotation marks to slanted. Word accomplishes this by substituting nonstandard ANSI text characters. When the text is copied and pasted, those "illegal" characters can cause strange results. The quick fix is to change the default setting in Word:
1. On the toolbar, select **Tools > AutoCorrect Options**.
2. Click the **AutoFormat** tab, and then clear **Replace "straight quotes" with "smart quotes".**

Other tips

Resist certain phrases, clichés, shortcuts, or ways to avoid taking more time, thought, and care in writing. "For example" or "For instance" should alert you that you haven't made your point clearly enough.

Explain task steps, concepts, and so forth clearly enough to stand alone, without examples. Usually, you haven't described an idea fully or clearly if you need to use an example. Also, examples sometimes don't have enough context for the reader to understand them easily. **Note:** This guideline is not meant to discourage examples. Examples can illustrate a point that you already made; just do not use them to make the point. The reader needs to be able to understand the idea without them.

Be concise. Cut unnecessary words such as these: It's advisable to, Be advised, It is a good idea to, Be sure to, You should often, a number of, some (unless by "some" you mean only part).

Replace these words with a conjunction, such as *and*, or delete them: simply, as well as, the fact that.

Never say "above" nor "below," because the position could change in a later version. Instead, use these words or something similar, if necessary: earlier, preceding, previously, following, which follows.

State the purpose first: Give experienced practitioners the opportunity to skim or skip the bulk of the text in the method element if they already understand the idea.

Use complete but short sentences and paragraphs.

Write succinctly; less is better.

If it's obvious, don't say it.

Don't repeat a point. Use enough words to be precise but not so many that it gets redundant.

If you must reiterate a point, refer to it by using a hyperlink, instead.

Remember these points:

- A single sentence conveys a single idea.

- The reader's comprehension begins to deteriorate when a sentence is longer than 10-12 words.

- Long blocks of text can be intimidating to the reader. A reader is more likely to read a series of short paragraphs than one lengthy chunk of text.

Break large ideas from large paragraphs into smaller chunks.

Remember that this text will be translated into many languages. Avoid using words, such as slang, that may not translate accurately to other languages.

Avoid structures that depend on how plurals are created in English. For example, do not write "use case(s)." The plural includes the singular, so you can either use plural only or say "use case or use cases, or both."

Avoid abbreviations such as *ex* or *e.g.* when you mean *for example*. Instead, say what you mean. Also avoid abbreviations if you have not already defined the term. For example, refer to "IBM Rational Unified Process (RUP)" before using "RUP."

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